Running of a Metre Gauge express train between Virudhunagar and Madras *via* Aruppukkottai, Manamadurai and Karaikkudi is neither commercially justified nor feasibile at present due to operational and resource constraints.

Loss of Top Soil

*138. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what, according to study, if any, is the annual loss of top soil in the country and how does it compare with the annual loss of top soil in the other Asian Countries;

(b) what are the areas identified where loss of top soil is high;

(c) what is its impact on the overall foodgrains priducion in the country; and

(d) what are the short-term/long-term Programmes, if any, under implementation for the conservation of soil in the country and what are the results achieved so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) Total estimated soil erosion in India is 5334 million tonnes (Averaging about 16.36 tonnes per hectare) out of which 29 per cent soil is lost permanently to the sea. In China, in the fifties, the annual average soil loss amount was 5000 million tonnes of which 34 per cent emptied into the sea.

(b) The areas estimated to face heavy soil loss are:—

(i) Black soil region;

(ii) North-Eastern Region;

(iii) Ravine Region; and

(iv) Assam Valley Region.

(c) Soil loss has adverse impact on the productivity of land and hence on food grains production.

(d) Soil Conservation measures such as land levelling, terracing, bunding, afforestation, horticulture and construction of water harvesting structures and integrated watershed development programmes are undertaken by State Governments. To supplement efforts of State Governments, the Government of India has, in operation, the following schemes to conserve soil and water:—

(1) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Soil Conservation in the Catchments of River Vallery Projects.

(2) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Watershed Management in the Catchments of Flood Prone Rivers.

(3) National Watershed Develoment Programme in Rainfed Areas.

(4) Reclamation of Ravinous Areas in Dacoity Prone District of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

(5) Control of Shifting Cultivation.

(6) Drought Prone Area Programme.

(7) Desert Development Programme.

Upto the end of VII Five Year Plan, an area of 33.85 million hectares have been treated for soil and moisture conservation. It has been found that soil moisture conservation measures have resulted in significant reduction in soil erosion and increase in agricultural productivity.

Ratification of I.L.O. Conventions

*139. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the number of I.L.O. conventions ratified so far by Government; and